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# Soviets match U.S. defense buildup

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WASHINGTON — A huge Soviet arms modernization effort has paralleled the Reagan administration's trillion-dollar military buildup and left questions as to whether either side has gained advantages.

Intelligence services of the U.S. land, air and sea forces in the European and Atlantic areas report across-the-board Soviet advances, ranging from rifles and jet fighters to gigantic, 25,000-ton missile-bearing submarines.

Some military leaders, warning how the balance might have tipped without the U.S. buildup, say they see no end to the race short of arms control agreements.

Some outsiders, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as national security adviser in the Carter administration, say the time has come for new efforts to negotiate arms reductions in Central Europe.

In that region, says Maj. Gen. Leonard H. Perroots, intelligence chief for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, the Soviet Union has been fielding new weapons "across the spectrum" with surprising speed.

Interviewed recently at his headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, West Germany, General Perroots said: "I'm not sure what's driving it, whether this is influenced in any way by the Reagan administration or an attempt to do some things before [arms] talks. . . . I don't intend to philosophize."

A paper prepared by the intelligence staff at the U.S. Army's European headquarters in Heidelberg, West Germany, reaches conclusions similar to the Air Force's. "During the past five years," the paper says, "the Soviets have modernized virtually every aspect of their force" and reorganized combat units to take best advantage of the arms and equipment.

Similarly, the U.S. Atlantic Fleet's intelligence staff at Norfolk calls the past five years a period of rapid expansion and modernization of Soviet fleets with new classes of submarines, better and farther-ranging missiles and huge surface warships.

Information from officers and from the intelligence papers does not suggest that the Soviet arms are better or that Soviet technology has

overtaken American. The picture drawn is one of increasing arms sophistication and an apparently endless supply.

In effect, as Gen. Glenn K. Otis, the Army commander in Europe, says, the U.S. buildup on the continent has meant running to stay even.

General Perroots says Moscow has replaced its fleet of ground-attack aircraft "almost 100 percent in two years." The newest is the SU-25 Frogfoot, akin to the U.S. Air Force's veteran A-10. New fighter planes are the MIG-29 Fulcrum and SU-27 Flanker, generally comparable to the U.S. F-16 and F-15 respectively.

The American AWACS radar plane, for surveillance and air-battle control, also has been emulated by the Soviet IL-76 Mainstay, and a refueling tanker plane has been developed from the IL-76 Candid.

In addition, General Perroots says, the Soviet appetite for anti-aircraft missile systems appears insatiable. "There's never [before] been an environment that has seen the [deployment] of 11 overlapping surface-to-air missile systems — infrared, hand-held, fixed, mobile." The Soviets are on the verge of deploying a new one, the SA-12, and yet another may be in development.

A major U.S. achievement over the past few years, the general says, has been the rapid acceleration of human and electronic intelligence gathering, which vastly improves the capability to monitor all Soviet developments. The United States is not going to match the Soviets numerically, he says, so "we have to target them better and we have to monitor them better."

Army intelligence at Heidelberg reports that during the past five years Soviet ground forces have been re-equipped with the rapid-firing AK-74 assault rifle and a new generation of anti-tank weapons.

The T-64 tank is replacing older T-55s and T-62s in East Germany and the latest Soviet tank, the T-80, is now being fielded. There also are new infantry fighting vehicles, BMP-2s, and updated attack helicopters, as well as more accurate and longer-range battlefield missiles. In artillery, the Army says, the Soviet forces "continue to outrange any artillery available in the NATO forces."

At Norfolk, Navy intelligence runs

off a similarly long list of recent Soviet advances — delivery of the third 25,000-ton Typhoon-class submarine, fitted to carry 20 missiles with six to nine warheads each; nine separate classes of submarines in production; a third 28,000-ton nuclear-powered cruiser of the Korov class under construction, and the first big (65,000-ton) Soviet aircraft carrier being built.

Where does it all end?

Says Adm. Wesley L. MacDonald, commander of the Atlantic Fleet and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization naval forces: "The end of it is to make the posture that we think we need . . . to be able to deal with the Soviets in future negotiations . . . that will lead to some types of arms limitations." Otherwise, "I don't see how you turn it off. I honestly don't."